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SUBJECT: TUZMEN OUTLINES GOT'S STRATEGY TO BOOST BILATERAL TRADE

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This message was coordinated with Embassy Ankara.

11. (SBU) Summary: Foreign Trade Minister Kursad Tuzmen outlined the GOT's strategy to increase bilateral trade with the United States in a luncheon address to the Turkish-American Business Council (TAIK) on March 10. Coopting the Foreign Ministry's "Year of the Americas"-- which some TAIK contacts note was originally intended to focus on Latin America-- Tuzmen and his Ministry have developed a detailed action plan targeting six key states. Among the envisioned measures are trade delegations, enhanced support for Turkish companies participating in U.S. trade fairs, and a "Turquality" project in New York. Noting that the Ministry had succeeded in raising Turkey's trade with its neighbors (in the broadest sense) from 19 to 55 billion USD over the last six years, Tuzmen set the ambitious goal of achieving similar result with the U.S., citing Ahmet Ertugun's advice to a youthful Ray Charles-- "if you go after pennies you will get pennies; if you go after dollars, you will get dollars." End Summary.

12. (SBU) More broadly, Tuzmen indicated that Turkey seeks to realize 100 billion USD in exports by 2010, up from 73 billion last year. Noting Turkey's miniscule share of the U.S. market (3/1000's of U.S. imports, by his calculations, and less for some states like California), he argued that Turkey has neglected the U.S. and needs a specific strategy to make up ground. That strategy, he said, will include both target states (New York, California, Texas, Illinois, Florida and Georgia-- representing 15 of the top U.S. ports of entry) and target sectors. Increasing the familiarity of U.S. companies with Turkish products is a key Ministry objective. To that end, the Ministry will help individual firms participating in U.S. fairs by increasing its underwriting of their participation from 50 to 60 percent of the total cost, while it will also send national delegations to eight major fairs. Tuzmen also announced special trade missions to New York, Chicago, and San Francisco.

13. (SBU) In addition, Tuzman said Turkey will build on past efforts to introduce particular products like Turkish hazelnuts, marble or leather to the U.S. market, while it will also initiate a "Turquality" Project in New York to highlight the improving quality of Turkish goods. Tuzmen stressed as well that the Ministry's initiative is not limited to increasing trade, it also seeks increased U.S. investment in Turkey to further cement the economic ties between the two countries. To that end, investment seminars are planned in cities ranging from Chicago to California. Finally, Tuzmen noted that the Ministry will turn to professional consulting firms to help its efforts, and he also gave a plug for the recently concluded agreement between the Turkish Union of Chambers (TOBB), USAID, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, arguing that it too will help to make clear "Turkey's weaknesses and weak points in the U.S. market and provide an opportunity to correct them."

14. (SBU) Comment: TAIK provided a good venue for Tuzmen to roll out his U.S. trade strategy. Some staffers there have noted delicately, however, that the Trade Ministry's enthusiasm and initiative has shifted the focus of what the Foreign Ministry had originally intended to be the "Year of the Americas to a more U.S.-centric vision. End Comment.
JONES